

New report finds a need to improve consideration of health effects in the NEPA process

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The National Research Council just released the pre-publication version of a [new report](#) entitled: "Improving Health in the United States: The Role of Health Impact Assessment."

NRDC and others have been advocating for years that a [Health Impact Assessment](#) (HIA) should be conducted as part of the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or other environmental reviews (state or local) when oil and gas development is anticipated to have an impact on human health.

Among the report's findings:

- There is a need for "health-informed decision-making."
- Consideration of health effects under NEPA has been limited.
- The integration of health into the NEPA process should be improved.
- HIA is an appropriate way to meet the requirement for health analysis under NEPA.
- HIA is an "especially promising way to factor health considerations into the decision-making process."
- HIA "uses scientific data, professional expertise, and stakeholder input to identify and evaluate public-health consequences of proposals and suggests actions that could be taken to minimize adverse health impacts and optimize beneficial ones."

While evidence continues to mount about the potential [health effects](#) of living near oil and gas operations, it is also becoming increasingly clear that we don't have the data or analysis we need from health experts to fully understand the risks from being exposed to toxic oil and gas pollution. With federal and state agencies expected to approve more drilling permits in the years to come, now is the time to ensure that health impact assessments are fully incorporated into the environmental review process.

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